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## Brain Repair Centre Opens Neuroimaging Research Lab Anchors Atlantic Canada as World Leader in Neuroscience Research

**NRC - CNRC**

**Halifax NS: 9 December 2003** – Provincial and federal officials and researchers were on hand today at the Halifax Infirmary site of the Queen Elizabeth II Health Sciences Centre to officially open Canada's newest Neuroimaging Research Laboratory, home to one of the most powerful human imaging magnets in the world. The 4 Tesla magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) system and accompanying lab hold the potential to advance research that could benefit millions of people who suffer from brain disorders.

  
**NOVA SCOTIA**  
Economic Development

The sophisticated brain-imaging infrastructure complements areas of unique expertise in the region, including the Halifax-based Brain Repair Centre's (BRC) neurotransplantation program, the only one in Canada and one of only four centres worldwide.

"This new lab anchors the work of the Brain Repair Centre and reinforces the region's status as a pioneer in the field of brain repair research and neuroimaging technology," said Premier John Hamm. "The lab represents a potential source of new medicines, new cures, and new life-saving treatments for people around the world."

 **DALHOUSIE**  
University

"The lab is already attracting top-flight researchers to our growing life sciences sector," the Premier added, "a brain gain that over time will create a broad range of health and economic benefits for the province."

"This is a model of innovation and collaboration for Atlantic Canada, as well as the rest of the country," said Allan Rock, Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for the National Research Council (NRC).

  
**Capital Health**

"The strategic partnership of NRC with leading researchers and institutions in the region is advancing the frontier of neuroscience and neuroimaging, firmly positioning Halifax and Canada as leaders in these fields," stated Robert Thibault, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

The partnership contributed \$10.05 million for the development of a state-of-the-art 4 Tesla magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) system and accompanying research facilities.

Queen Elizabeth II  
Health Sciences Centre  
Foundation

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NRC's contribution of \$8.45 million includes \$4.2 million for the MRI system and \$4.0 million for several research and technical positions and operating costs, ensuring the sustainability of the project. The NRC-Industrial Research Assistance Program, involved in the development of phases of the BRC, assisted in the project by helping to develop initial business plans, organizational framework and cluster possibilities, and providing over \$500,000 in funding. The Province invested \$1.25 million in the construction of the lab as part of its economic growth strategy, *Opportunities for Prosperity*, which encourages commercialization of research and innovation in the life sciences.

The QEII Foundation and NRC also contributed \$350,000 and \$250,000 respectively, to the construction costs on land donated by Capital Health adjacent to the Halifax Infirmary site of the QEII.

"The neuroimaging lab should be a source of pride for both the region and the rest of Canada," remarked Dr. Ivar Mendez, Professor and Head of the Division of Neurosurgery at Dalhousie University and Chair of the BRC. "We now have the best minds working with the most innovative technology to research ways of curing formerly incurable brain disorders. The future is truly ours to chart," added Dr. Mendez.

The ultra-high-field MRI and functional imaging centre gives researchers the ability to probe further and more effectively than ever before, leading to research discoveries that could benefit people around the world who suffer from brain disorders such as Parkinson's, Huntington's and Alzheimer's disease, multiple sclerosis, epilepsy, cancer, spinal-cord injury, vision disorders, stroke and serious mental illness. These advances are also expected to foster significant commercial potential, including the development of surgical and medical devices, pharmaceutical products, innovative imaging technologies and related software, and stem-cell technologies.

"As a key partner in this initiative, we are enhancing the strength of neuroscience researchers and clinicians in the region and supporting their efforts to improve the diagnosis and treatment of neurological disorders affecting millions of Canadians," said Dr. Arthur Carty, NRC President. "This support will pay dividends for science, technology, and the economy."

"Research is an integral part of our mission to improve the health and care of Atlantic Canadians," said Capital Health CEO, Don Ford. "The neuroimaging laboratory will truly be a magnet for recruiting staff, bringing new opportunities to our region, and ultimately benefiting medical science and patient care."

"The work underway at the new lab represents the innovation and collaboration that has made us unique and a world-renowned center of excellence in the field," said Dr. Tom Traves, President of Dalhousie University. He added that, "The lab provides opportunities for a range of training and research activities that will enhance the University's mission and our connection to the community."

The BRC is a multidisciplinary collaboration linking world-class researchers and physicians specializing in the field of brain repair. They range from surgeons who replace human brain tissue to recover lost capabilities, to scientists in the field of imaging, stem-cell neurobiology, pharmacology, psychiatry, ophthalmology, neurology, and cognitive neuroscience. The MRI project adds to the growing research infrastructure, attracting researchers and physicians with strong institutional and commercial ties who will share their expertise, resources, and partnerships to advance the field of brain repair.

The partners represented at the grand opening today – Industry Canada and the NRC, Nova Scotia Economic Development, Capital Health, Dalhousie University, the QEII Foundation, and the Brain Repair Centre -- demonstrate the effectiveness of this model of successful collaboration.

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